TRADITIONAL MARTINIST ORDER

ORATORY SECTION

FIRST DEGREE

LESSON SIX

"It is not the head which is necessary to advance in Truth; it is the heart."

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CONCURRENCE

Victor-Émile Michelet is an important figure in Martinism. A companion of Papus and Augustin Chaboseau, he served as a member of the first Supreme Consul of the Martinist Order, founded in 1891. He was also appointed Grand Master of the Traditional Martinist Order in April 1932, and assumed this function until his transition on January 12, 1938. In accordance with this monograph, here is what he wrote about the symbolism of the mask in a text which he presented in 1926, taken from our archives:

Put on a new elegant, bright or whimsical suit; conceal your face under a masque with a fixed expression; assume a new personality, completely unknown; discover another, another with more freedom and much lighter, let go of the usual worries and rejoice in your metamorphosis; while it is joy that gives us the fancy garments; it is a vague inquietude that gives us the mask.

Inquietude? Yes! It is not without reason, in Roman antiquity, the carnival games - the Saturnales - were placed under the auspices of Saturn, the planetary god to which tradition attributes a restless and anxious nature. Inquietude? Yes, because one is hiding one's personality in the guise of another very different, in order to disguise one's own reality, to maximize the distance between one's inner life and external activities, to create a superimposed person on one's own.

And yet, is a person not already a mask? The life of words continues according to an infallible logic. In the theaters of antiquity, on an outdoor stage, in front of countless terraces, the actor always wore a mask whose mouth was a megaphone, and this mask was named "person." The voice rang through the mask (persona). Thus if one is a person, it is the mask that gives us our name. In the ancient tragedies, the hero was always in relationship with the divine world or the demonic world. To spawn with supernatural beings, he always wore a mask, and he presented himself with a ritualistic appearance, designed according to the canons of a hieratic art.

Victor-Émile Michelet (1861 - 1938)

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FIRST DEGREE LESSON SIX

THE MASK, THE CLOAK AND THE CORDELIÉRE

Dear Supplicant,

I greet you before the Luminaries of the Traditional Martinist Order!

To conclude the series of monographs devoted to Martinist symbolism, we return today to the mask, cloak and cordelière. Beginning with the next monograph, we will be studying a fundamental theme in Martinism: Creation.

In the introductory ritual of this degree, it was stated that the mask *"symbolizes impersonality, in that it hides the identity of the wearer and makes each of us an unknown in the midst of other unknowns."* This also means that one must do good in an impersonal manner. Regarding this, Augustin Chaboseau, co-founder of the Martinist Order, along with Papus, declared that:

All the good that we do, in any shape or form, must remain secret and unknown. Knowing in advance that the person we have helped remains unaware of our personality; we will not await acknowledgment or thanks. A composite entity, each of us is only an invisible cell of the body of humanity that works for the goal toward which we all strive. We know that none among us will reach the goal before the others. This is the secret of a true society! When invisible and silent, we do not step on any toes, and our help can be accepted by the most independent and most proud, without having the individual suffer through conscience or vanity. These are the fruits of society.

It has also been said that the mask represents the idea that each Martinist comes face-to-face with one's self during our spiritual journey. It symbolizes the loneliness that that we may face on the path of initiation. In this regard, the help of others is limited to the example or advice they can give us, for our personal evolution results only from our own efforts. Each of us is responsible for our own thoughts, words and actions. We must answer to our own soul and conscience regarding our errors and misconduct. In this way, the mask illustrates the responsibility implied along with the freedom that is gives. Regarding freedom, Eliphas Lévi wrote: "*Freedom, we can call the divinity of humanity, is the most beautiful, the most superb, the most irrevocable of all the gifts of God to humanity: the freedom that the Supreme Creator can not violate without denying Its own nature."* In our present state, none of us have this complete freedom, which is that of the mind, soul and body. We can however acquire this freedom by subduing our selfish desires.

Augustin Chaboseau summarized the symbolism of the mask that we have just discussed. During a meeting of the Traditional Martinist Order held in 1931, he said: *"This protective mask, while isolating its wearer, teaches us to remain invisible. It leaves to us and to our conscience the responsibilities of our actions while giving us at the same time the absolute freedom that we need in order to act. Is this not the role of the true Initiate? … By this permanent symbol, we want to constantly remind the student that true Knowledge is impersonal and unknown outside of its manifestations. Consequently, it can never be personified by an individual."* He added: *"I want to remind you of our essential goal: to encourage each one of us to search, and to help each other find. That is all, indeed, that is all. To search for and to find what? Oneself, and therefore the rest, since all reflections of the world and all its resonances are within us."*

The necessity of abnegation in the initiatory quest, the search for knowledge through introspection and individual work are the principal teachings that we can take from the mask. A fundamental symbol of Martinism, the mask can be represented by the Hebrew letter י (Yod), which has a numeric value of 10. In the Kabala, Yod is considered the letter from which all Hebrew letters have been formed. As an analogy, each of us is rendered impersonal by the mask and is a cell of the great body of humanity.

Let us now consider the cloak. It is one of the most profound symbols that our Order has placed before the eyes of the Initiate. As was conveyed to you in the introductory ritual for this degree, the cloak symbolizes the entrance into silence, the contemplation and the inner purification that all Martinists must practice to discover our true nature and to receive communion with the Divine. It is indeed in isolation that we can harmonize our self with the spiritual world and receive the impulse of the Word, an absolute condition for moving from Initiate to Adept. So, to don the cloak is like isolating oneself from the outside world to enter into the stillness of consciousness and to benefit from the tranquility of one's inner sanctuary.

Augustin Chaboseau will once again guide us on the meaning of isolation that the cloak symbolizes. He tells us: *"All the reflections of the world and all of its resonances are within us. The cloak is what protects me from these resonances. When I am enfolded in the cloak, nothing that is pronounced, expressed, or announced in the profane world can reach my consciousness."* As indicated in this quotation, isolation and peace of mind are necessary to advance on the path of Light. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin taught the same when he affirmed, *"Great truths can only be taught in silence*."

As we have previously indicated, the cloak also symbolizes the isolation that we find when we retire to our inner sanctuary, the ideal place where we must go every time that we have

the need to be revitalized on the spiritual plane. Regarding this, Augustin Chaboseau also said:*"The cloak is like the walls of a deserted room where a lamp had been lit. I was alone in this room with a light; I left the room without touching the flame, and on my departure, I carefully locked the door. No one can receive this light and yet it continues to shine. I simply have to re-open the door, enter the room and I would find what was illuminating me, with all that this light illuminated for me. Further, as long as I am enfolded in the cloak, and every time I wear the cloak, I am the companion of light, and light is my companion...."*

The cloak also symbolizes the caution that must be taken by any mystic who undertakes the perilous path of initiation. Saint - Martin preferred to represent this quest as a journey that we had to accomplish to reclaim our birthplace, in other words the place of our first emanation. In his work, *The Ministry of the Human-Spirit*, he compares this journey to climbing a mountain, in this way: *"As we climb up this mountain, we don Elijah's cloak, which we can inherit from birth and with which we can make fire fall from the sky, we can divide the waters from the river, and we can heal the sick and resuscitate the dead. This is because only Elijah's cloak, or our pure and primitive garment, can keep the Word within us, just as an earthly coat can keep us warm. The animal being cannot keep this living word; only our virginal body can preserve it.*"

The cloak can be represented by the Hebrew letter ת (Tav). According to Teder, an eminent Martinist who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is: *"a kabalistic sign of Truth, Light, the Sun and Humanity in our state of Perfection."* The numeric value of the letter Tav is 400, which is 5 x 8 x 10. According to Teder, it signifies that *"We rise toward the Divine, who is represented by the number 10, through the doors of death, represented by the number 5, and the union with the Reconciler, symbolized by the number 8."*

Enfolded in the cloak, we become *Silent*. When we wear the mask, we become *Unknown*. But what would be the use of the mask and the cloak if we did not possess the Light? Such is the symbolism of the cordelière that you donned during the introductory ritual for this degree. As was indicated to you at that time, the cordelière represents the spiritual chain that links each Martinist to the Masters of the past, who are agents of the Divine Light among humanity. This same Light is present within you. It is your responsibility to make it grow day after day by your individual work until you receive Illumination.

The cordelière is a very old symbol, rich in mystical significance. In Antiquity, it was an important element of clothing, and it was only later that it became an esoteric symbol. In biblical time, to gird one's loin indicated that one was ready to act. This thought appears in the Gospel according to Saint Luke (Luke 17:8), where it is said: *"Fasten your belt and wait on me."* In

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universal symbolism, the cordelière is related to the belt, the rope, and the chain. Thus, it represents commitments, obligations, and duties. It is also a witness to the powers and forces of the one who wears it. In the Bible, it is also associated with humility (Psalms 18:32), and with justice, and fidelity (Isaiah 11:5). When it is tied, it symbolizes the union of different elements linked in the same function. By analogy with the rope, it evokes the idea of ascension and communication between above and below, the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual.

In India, the importance of the cordelière is such that the Brahmans must don it before accomplishing any religious rituals. It is for them a sacrosanct element and symbolizes the access to a superior life, comparable to a second birth. It also represents an opening to greater illumination and to a vast spiritual knowledge. In Sufism, the cordelière symbolizes the tie of obedience and signifies that each Sufi surrenders to Allah's commands. One also wears the cordelière to be surrounded with Divine Omnipotence. It is therefore a reminder that we must not solely count on the powers of our intelligence and our bodies. We can and must also call upon Divine Power to reach mastery. If we ask for it with conviction and sincerity, such Power will always surround us and will give us Its protection.

There is much to say about the symbolism of the mask, cloak and cordelière, however you should keep in mind that their value lies in the fact that they cannot be reduced to purely intellectual definitions. What we have explained to you about them constitutes only a basis for reflection in your individual work, because above all, it is internally that you must experience the mask, the cloak and the cordelière.

May you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom!

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PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Mask:	Impersonality Introspection Abnegation Freedom Symbol: י (Yod) = 10
Cloak:	Protection Isolation Purification Prudence Symbol: ת (Tav) = 400 (5 x 8 x10)
Cordelière:	Commitment Illumination Link between the visible and the invisible Union with the Initiates of the past

In this table you will find a summary of the explanations given to you regarding the symbolism attributed to the mask, the cloak and cordelière. Immerse yourself in their study.

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SUMMARY

After carefully studying this monograph, read the following summary. It contains the major points that you may want to reflect and meditate on during the coming days. If you have trouble understanding one of the points, return to the explanations given in the monograph. Immerse yourself in learning the points covered in this summary before proceeding with the study of the next monograph.

- The mask symbolizes impersonality and makes of each Martinist an unknown in the midst of other unknowns. It also represents the fact that we are free to act and that we alone must assume the responsibility for our actions.

- Augustin Chaboseau considered that the mask symbolized the responsibility that freedom brings: the abnegation in the initiatory quest, the search for knowledge by introspection, and individual work.

- The mask corresponds to the letter י (Yod). This is the letter from which all Hebrew letters were formed.

- The cloak symbolizes the isolation that we find when we retire into our inner sanctuary. The cloak also symbolizes the caution that must be taken by any mystic who undertakes the perilous path of initiation.

- The cloak can be represented by the Hebrew letter ת (Tav). According to Teder, an eminent Martinist from the beginning of the 20th century, it is: *"...the kabalistic sign of Truth, Light, the Sun and Humanity, in our state of Perfection."*

- In Antiquity, the cordelière was an important element of clothing and later became an esoteric symbol.

- In universal symbolism, the cordelière represents commitments and powers that the wearer possesses and humility, justice, fidelity, and communication between the material and the spiritual.

- In Martinism, the cordelière symbolizes the invisible link that unites us with the Masters of the Past and Divine Light.

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